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ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LETTERS SENT TO
THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON VOLUNTARY ACTION
BETWEEN MAY 15th AND AUGUST 31st, 1976

by

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and

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SQUARE ONE MANAGEMENT LTD.

Background study produced in 1976 for the National Advisory Council on Voluntary Action and funded by the Department of the Secretary of State. The text reflects the views of the author and not necessarily those of the Advisory Council or of the Department.

Assistance to Community
Groups Programme
Secretary of State
Ottawa K1A 0M5

February, 1978



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INTRODUCTION

In early May, the Chairman of the Council (Raynell Andreychuck) wrote to over fifteen hundred voluntary organizations within Canada. She informed them of the Council's work and intentions and invited them to make their views known to the Council.

The Chairman's letter included the following paragraphs:

"The Council has agreed that the main function of our report will be to clarify and set out our understanding of:

- a) The role and importance of voluntary action/voluntary organizations in a rapidly changing Canadian society;
- b) The role and responsibility of the Government of Canada in the provision of support to voluntary action/voluntary organizations;
- c) The status, condition and needs of voluntary organizations including their relations with the Government of Canada; and
- d) The actions which need to be taken by the Government of Canada in order to substantially improve the condition of voluntary organizations and their relations with the Government of Canada. . . .

"In addition, we are anxious to hear from you and your organizations about any aspect of your experience as a voluntary organization, including your relations with government departments. It would also assist us if you could take the time to comment on the major areas of our report (items a, b, c, and d, above). We need to hear from you by August 31st, 1976.

"Your submissions to us can be in any form and they need not be elaborate. We would be pleased to receive your comments about those things which concern you most, in the form of written material, audio tapes on standard cassettes, or even a long distance phone call."

By October 31st, 1976, 156 English letters and one tape cassette (again, in English) had been sent to the Council in response to the Chairman's letter. The analysis which follows is of these letters.

INTERPRETING THE DATA

The reader should note first that the following analysis is of letters written in English only. Therefore, these responses cannot be taken as representing the whole country. In particular, respondents from Quebec are grossly under-represented in this sample (eleven of 156). An analysis of the responses in French is being prepared by the Council.

The second point is that the analysis which follows is only of letters received up to October 31st. It is impossible to tell how many additional responses will be received by the Council in the months ahead. However, at the time of writing, letters are only trickling in at the rate of three or four a week.

The third point is that those who responded to the Council's letter did so in their own words. The Council made no attempt to structure the responses. In this circumstance, a theme noted by even 5% of respondents is significant, and one noted by over 10% of respondents is very significant.

THE MOST COMMON THEMES

The following themes were all mentioned by 15 or more respondents (number of respondents given in brackets at the end of each item):

1. The government must make a clear and open commitment to voluntary organizations. It "has the responsibility to create the conditions within which Canadian citizens are not only permitted but are encouraged and enabled to act voluntarily in relation to those things which concern them." (25)
2. Voluntary organizations must remain independent from government, for the government tends to control, corrupt and distort what it funds. (23)

3. The government must act to ensure that adequate core funding is provided to voluntary organizations. (22)

4. Voluntary organizations require competent professional assistance regarding their management and administration. That is, a voluntary organization does not require by definition that all the staff work is done by volunteers. (22)

5. A permanent national clearing house/council for voluntary action should be created to fulfil a variety of roles. (20)

6. Voluntary organizations need access to Ministers and government officials. These officials should consult with voluntary organizations and use the knowledge and resources the organizations represent. (19)

7. Tax credits should be given to Canadians who engage extensively in voluntary action. (18)

8. Voluntary organizations require reliable long term funding. (17)

9. Voluntary organizations are essential and central to our society and must remain so. They must continue to have a hand in shaping the Canadian future. (17)

10. The survival of lively and responsive voluntary organizations is increasingly being called into question by a deteriorating social/financial climate. (17)

11. The government should recognize openly and through extensive publicity campaigns, the value of voluntary organizations not only to the government but to Canadian society. (16)

12. Voluntary organizations are essential to the survival of a wide number of activities in Canadian society, e.g. the arts, sports, health care, and corrections. (16)

13. Increased tax incentives need to be provided to encourage Canadians to give to voluntary organizations. (16)

14. Volunteers increase the quality of service within ongoing organizations and increase the quality of life in communities. (15)

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES BY PROVINCES

The following table gives the distribution of responses by province. The percentage of the Canadian population in each province, according to the 1971 census, is also given for comparison.

<u>Province</u>	<u>No. of Replies</u>	<u>%age of Replies</u>	<u>%age of Can. pop.</u>
B.C.	18	11.5%	10.1%
Alberta	8	5.1%	7.5%
Saskatchewan	6	3.9%	4.3%
Manitoba	5	3.2%	4.6%
Ontario	83	53.2%	35.7%
Quebec	11	7.1%	27.9%
New Brunswick	6	3.9%	2.9%
Nova Scotia	5	3.2%	3.7%
P.E.I.	5	3.2%	.5%
Newfoundland	5	3.2%	2.4%
Yukon & N.W.T.	0	0	.25%
Unknown	4	2.5%	

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES BY MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

The responses ordered by municipal district show the following pattern:

<u>City</u>	<u>No. of Responses</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>No. of Responses</u>
Toronto	40	Edmonton	4
Ottawa	16	Halifax	4
Vancouver	14	Brantford	3
Montreal	9	Calgary	3
Saskatoon	6	Hamilton	3
Charlottetown	5	Saint John, N.B.	3
St. John's, Nfld.	5	St. Chatherines	3
Winnipeg	5	Fredericton	2

(cont.)

<u>City</u>	<u>No. of Responses</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>No. of Responses</u>
Kingston, Ont.	2	Québec, P.Q.	1
Kitchener-Waterloo	2	Sackville, N.B.	1
Whitby, Ont.	2	Sarnia, Ont.	1
Windsor, Ont.	2	Sherbrooke, P.Q.	1
Ancaster, Ont.	1	Sidney, B.C.	1
Georgetown, Ont.	1	Thunder Bay, Ont.	1
Golden, B.C.	1	Truro, N.S.	1
Lethbridge, Alta.	1	Welland, Ont.	1
London, Ont.	1	White Rock, B.C.	1
Owen Sound, Ont.	1	Vernon, B.C.	1

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES BY TYPE OF RESPONSE

The following shows the distribution of responses by type of response. It can be seen that 121 respondents (78%) replied as requested. It should be noted that at least some of the 34 respondents that send a pro forma response or sought information can be expected to submit their views to the Council at a later date.

<u>Type of Response</u>	<u>No. of Responses</u>	<u>%age of Responses</u>
Straight reply	74	47.4%
Reply and enclosures	47	30.2%
Pro forma	19	12.2%
Request for information	15	9.6%
Seek funds	1	.9%

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES BY TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

The following table sets out the distribution of responses by type of organization. It can be seen that a wide variety of organizations have been contacted by the Council. No single organization or type of organization dominates.

<u>Type of Organization</u>	<u>No. of Responses</u>	<u>%age of Responses</u>
Arts and high culture	20	12.8%
Disease-oriented and health services	18	11.5%
United Ways/social planning councils	11	7.1%
Volunteer bureaus/centres	9	5.8%
Women's groups	9	5.8%
Universities/colleges	8	5.1%
Citizen's action	7	4.5%
Corrections	7	4.5%
Organizations with international focus	7	4.5%
Youth oriented	7	4.5%
Family services	6	3.9%
Churches	5	3.3%
Provincial governments	4	2.7%
Foundations	3	1.9%
Indians	3	1.9%
Cable T.V.	2	1.3%
Drugs/alcohol	2	1.3%
Home and school	2	1.3%
Professional organizations	2	1.3%
Association of associations	1	.6%
Banks	1	.6%
Cities	1	.6%
Ecology	1	.6%
Hospitals	1	.6%
Libraries	1	.6%
Old Age	1	.6%
School boards	1	.6%
Sports	1	.6%
Individuals	15	9.6%

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES BY LENGTH

The following table sets out the distribution of responses by the length of the response. It should be noted that only three formal briefs were submitted. All others were submitted in the form of letters, with or without enclosures. Typically, letters were one to three pages long.

<u>No. of Words</u>	<u>No. of Responses</u>	<u>%age of Responses</u>
0 - 75	27	17.3%
75 - 150	22	14.1%
151 - 300	30	19.2%
301 - 500	30	19.2%
501 - 750	22	14.1%
751 - 1000	9	5.8%
1001 - 1500	6	3.9%
1501 - up	10	6.4%

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES BY ISSUE

A. The Role and Importance of Voluntary Action

1. Voluntary organizations are vital and essential to Canadian society and must continue to be involved in shaping it. Canadians must not allow government to wholly dominate their lives. (17)

2. Voluntary organizations are essential to the functioning of many areas of endeavour in Canadian society. Without volunteers, these areas could not function at their present levels of performance, e.g. theatre and the arts, corrections, probation, health care and athletics. (16)

Note: There are an estimated 600,000 Canadians involved in amateur athletics.

Note: One disease-oriented service organization indicates that its volunteers are worth \$225,000 a year.

3. Volunteers increase the quality of service within ongoing organizations and increase the quality of life in communities. (15)

4. Voluntary action encourages volunteers to develop and express a sense of responsibility to their community and the world.

5. Voluntary organizations allow citizens both to develop and express concern and compassion for their fellow man. (13)

6. Voluntary organizations are best able to initiate and demonstrate new services because they are responsive to new trends and values within Canadian society. (13)

7. Voluntary organizations are more efficient and cost effective than government bureaucracies because of the commitment of volunteers, and because they keep a closer eye on financial spending. (13)

8. Voluntary organizations encourage the volunteer to grow personally and to develop a sense of responsibility. (12)

9. Volunteers serve to humanize otherwise wholly bureaucratic organizations. (10)

10. Voluntary organizations enable Canadians to engage themselves meaningfully in their community. This helps to overcome alienation from Canadian society. (10)

11. Voluntary organizations are basic to democracy. Without them, democracy is not possible. (8)

12. Voluntary organizations improve the climate within communities and the educational level of communities. (6)

13. Voluntary action provides a unique human service--person to person on a voluntary basis. (5)

14. Voluntary organizations can serve to prod and watch the government because they are independent. (5)

15. Voluntary organizations create jobs and make a significant contribution to the Canadian economy. (5)

16. Voluntary action is a useful way to invest one's leisure. (3)

17. Voluntary action allows women to re-engage in the broader Canadian society after having raised their families, and if often the training ground for future careers. (3)

18. Volunteers are able to assess an area of need on criteria other than personal financial gain or economic feasibility. (1)

19. Volunteers can offer a vast range of resources, skills and abilities which an organization could not otherwise offer its clientele. (1)

20. Voluntary action can be taken for granted. People are going to organize to act. (1)

21. The role of the voluntary sector can be summed up in two words-- prevention and rehabilitation. (1)

B. The Role and Responsibility of the Government of Canada

1. The government must make a clear and open commitment to voluntary organizations. It "has the responsibility to create the conditions within which Canadian citizens are not only permitted but are encouraged and enabled to act voluntarily in relation to those things which concern them." (25)

2. Voluntary organizations must remain independent from government, and must guard against the government's tendency to control, corrupt and distort what it funds. (23)

3. The government must fund voluntary organizations, but carefully, with sensitivity and respect. (14)

4. There is a dangerous trend in Canadian society for the government to define a situation and initiate action within it, thus leaving voluntary organizations and citizens in a passive, reactive role. Genuine voluntary action seeks to overcome this trend. (13)

5. The government should act to ensure that voluntary organizations do not waste resources. Therefore, a careful watch should be kept for duplicate and uncoordinated efforts. (7)

6. Governments should not fund 100% of the budgets of voluntary organizations. Such organizations must be able to demonstrate some significant element of community support. (6)

7. A form of cooperation akin to partnership to needed between the voluntary sector and government. The government must plan with people, not for people. (6)

8. The government should exercise some degree of review and overview regarding the status and role of voluntary organizations in Canadian society. (3)

9. The government should assist voluntary organizations in evaluating themselves and their programs to ensure better quality. (4)

10. The government should support groups advocating social change. (6 for - 1 against)

11. The government has the responsibility of informing voluntary organizations and citizens at large of its "policies and strategies" regarding voluntary action, funding criteria, etc. (2)

12. The government must encourage Canadians to give more money to voluntary organizations. (1)

13. Government commitment to support of voluntary organizations should reflect the belief that many worthwhile social services cannot adequately be handled by government agencies bound by red tape, insufficient local knowledge, and 9 to 5 hours. (1)

14. The most important role of government is to regulate impartially fair relations between people. (1)

15. The government should recognize the contribution made by volunteer hours to a given organization when considering conditional or matching grant criteria. (1)

C. The Status, Condition and Needs of Voluntary Organizations

1. Voluntary organizations require competent professional assistance regarding their management and administration. That is, a voluntary organization does not require by definition that all the staff work is done by volunteers. (22)

2. Voluntary organizations need access to Ministers and government officials who should consult with voluntary organizations and use the knowledge and resources they represent. (19)

3. The survival of lively and responsive voluntary organizations is increasingly being called into question by a deteriorating social/financial climate. (17)

4. Voluntary organizations require reliable long term funding. (16)

5. Voluntary organizations require assistance and more competence regarding recruiting, training, counselling, and using volunteers. (14)

6. Volunteers need to be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses. (11)

7. Volunteers need common insurance and pension schemes. (6)

8. Voluntary organizations often need assistance regarding their structures and the relations among board, staff, and volunteers. (4)

9. Voluntary organizations are having to take too much time dealing with government interventions, e.g. demands of bilingualism. (3)

10. Some voluntary organizations have experienced good relations with federal departments and the federal government. (3)

11. Some voluntary organizations have experienced great frustration in dealing with the federal government and its departments. (3)

12. Voluntary organizations need assistance regarding the education and training of their professional staffs. (3)

13. Voluntary organizations need assistance regarding translation and the requirements of bilingualism. (2)

14. Voluntary organizations need assistance regarding transportation costs of meetings. (2)

15. National voluntary organizations are having a difficult time because of growing provincialization within Canada. (2)

16. Voluntary organizations require assistance in organizing, operating and funding conferences. (1)

17. Summer students are needed to spell off volunteers to allow the latter to have a summer break. (1)

18. One respondent has experienced such great delay and mistrust in dealing with the federal government that he fears to inform the Council frankly of his opinion, for fear it will be used against his organization when it next applies for grants. (1)

19. Rural and small town voluntary organizations are too often neglected in terms of government help. (1)

20. Changes in the role of women in our society will necessitate and bring about changes in volunteerism. (1)

D. Recommendations to the Federal Government

1. Core funding should be provided to voluntary organizations to bolster the competence of their staffs and administration. (22)

2. A permanent national clearing house on voluntary action should be created to assist volunteers and voluntary organizations in the areas of administration, relations with government, research, public relations, coordination, and assistance regarding bilingualism. (20)

3. Tax credits should be provided to volunteers in lieu of the work they do as volunteers. (18)

4. The government should provide long term (three to five years) reliable funding, and not just fund voluntary organizations to innovate and experiment. (17)

5. The federal government should recognize, through publicity campaigns and cabinet speeches, the value of voluntary action within Canada. For example, a short film could be produced on "Volunteering in Canada". (17)

6. The federal government should provide greatly increased tax incentives to encourage Canadians to give money to voluntary organizations. (16)

7. The government should find ways of ensuring that volunteers are reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses. (12)

8. Questions regarding voluntary activity of Canadian citizens should be added to the next census questionnaire. (8)

9. Funds should be provided to universities to engage in research regarding voluntary organizations and volunteers. (7)

10. Provincial governments should be encouraged to better coordinate voluntary activity within their boundaries. (7)

11. The government should not wholly take over activities now operated by voluntary organizations, as it will not be able to get Canadians to volunteer for government-run operations. (6)

12. The government should ensure that credit is given for voluntary work by employers, in educational institutions, and in the government labour survey. (6)

13. The government should provide special assistance to voluntary organizations with international concerns. (3)

14. The government should assist in the establishment of common insurance (including automobile) and pension schemes for volunteers. (6)

15. The government should use voluntary organizations to provide more services through service contracts. (4)

16. The government should not encourage that volunteers be paid. Volunteers must remain volunteers. (4 for - 1 against)

17. The government should second its staff to voluntary organizations or make them available as consultants. (4)

18. The government should do away with the \$100 standard deduction and change the laws regarding the definition of a "charitable organization". (3)

19. The government should encourage its public servants to engage in voluntary activity. (2)

20. The government should provide assistance to voluntary organizations to meet the requirements of bilingualism. (2)

21. The government should assist national voluntary organizations to meet Canadian transportation costs. (2)

22. The government should make more use of voluntary organizations. (2)

23. The government should assist voluntary organizations to meet increased postal rates. (2)

24. The government must be careful to ensure that its funding does not prolong the life of a dead organization, e.g. create miniature bureaucracies by 100% government support. (2)

25. The government should allow special deductions of capital gifts to encourage living Canadians to divest themselves of their wealth. (1)

26. Each department should name a particular person to liaize with voluntary organizations. (1)

27. The government should set up a sub-department of voluntarism. (1)

28. The government should assist voluntary organizations to organize regional workshops. (1)

29. The government should reduce the number of surveys of voluntary organizations and ensure better coordination. (1)

30. The government should use the surveys of voluntary organizations it has commissioned in the past. (1)

31. All non-tax money (such as lotteries) should be given to voluntary organizations unconditionally. (1)

32. All levels of government should be involved in funding, as well as private funds from both industry and individuals. (1)

33. Financial support to voluntary organizations by government should be based on: (a) matching support from the community; (b) realistic and well-defined program objectives; and (c) experienced and competent staff. (1)

34. Tax consideration should be given (as in the U.S.) for merchandise donated to voluntary organizations to raise funds. (1)

35. The government should supply summer employment for students in voluntary organizations, i.e. pay them to work there. (1)

36. "More money should be given to help the young to help people in trouble--then you wouldn't need your mental institutions and jails". (1)

COMMENTS REGARDING THE COUNCIL

1. The Council should be aware that the timing of its request is poor from the point of view of many voluntary organizations closing down for the summer. (6)
2. Three respondents attacked the Council.
3. The lack of a B.C. member on the Council was noted. (1)
4. It was requested that the Council's guidelines be made public. (1)
5. Voluntary groups should know what the Council has to say before the report goes to the Minister. Research progress results should be made available, and voluntary groups should have access to the final report. (1)

CONCLUDING COMMENT

It is quite clear from the tone and manner of the responses that those who did respond are greatly concerned about the prospects for effective voluntary action within Canadian society. There is a deep sense that Canadian society has, in large measure, been made rich by the fact and extent of voluntary action within it, even if this is not widely understood as part of our official mythology.

However, there is a widespread recognition that voluntary action and voluntary organizations cannot exist without reference to federal and provincial governments. While there is a great desire to remain independent for the sake of the society, there is a recognition that voluntary organizations as well as governments must be held accountable. In this regard, many of the letters contained a degree of openness in self-criticism which is seldom, if ever, shown by governments.

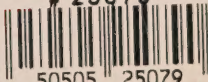
Many of the writers recognized--often in fear--that effective voluntary action will not be possible in the future unless the federal government acts to create the conditions within which voluntary action is valued and encouraged. The sense is clearly communicated that the federal government at the present time underestimates the importance of voluntary action and voluntary organizations within Canadian society, and that in many of its actions it shows that it has little respect for the integrity of voluntary organizations or their contribution to Canadian society. One of the deepest and most consistent themes of the responses is a cry for respect and sensitivity on the part of the federal government--an appeal to it that, in the future, it should damage voluntary organizations less as it deals with them.



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